

LECTURE RECITAL  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
Department of Music

November 17, 1987

SUZANNE SUMMERVILLE, Mezzo-soprano

PROGRAM

Liebesschwarmerei (Cacilie v. W.).....Louis Spohr  
Gretchen am Spinnrade (von Goethe)  
Mignon's Lied (von Goethe)

Three Duets for Two Sopranos, Op. 108 .....Louis Spohr

Abendlied (Friedrich Rochlitz)  
Das Herz (Anon.)  
Ruhe (Gustav von Deuern)

Three Duets, Op. 107 .....Louis Spohr

Liebesfragen (H. Schulz)  
Wechselgesang (C.A. Tiege)  
Liebe (Anon.)

From "Sechs deutsche Lieder für eine Singstimme,  
Klarinette und Klavier", Op 103..... Louis Spohr

Sei still mein Herz  
Zwiesengesang

From "Lieder mit Violine und Piano", Op. 154 .....Louis Spohr

Erlkönig  
Abendstille

INTERVAL

"If the Stars Are Burning" (1987).....Violet Archer

Texts by Frank Buske

- I. The Woman Who Crossed the Plains
- II. The Lady Who Lived Near the Mountains
- III. Autumn: Kantishna  
To Johnny B., In Memoriam



## PROGRAM NOTES

Louis Spohr was born in Braunschweig, Germany, in 1784 when Mozart was writing his "Haydn" String Quartets, and he died in Kassel in 1859, the year that Wagner completed "Tristan und Isolde." In the early years of the 19th century he played an important part in the development of Romanticism, and for the last thirty years of his life he was widely regarded as the greatest living composer. Spohr began writing Lieder in 1808. His first set (Opus 25) includes a highly expressive setting of Goethe's "Gretchen am Spinnrade," which Schubert was to set several years later. Spohr anticipates Schubert in several early songs, particularly in his harmonic language and in the freedom of the accompanimental writing, which ranges from simple support of the melodic line ("Mignon's Lied") to completely independent piano parts. In addition to an acute sensitivity to the text and a concern to express its meaning through a flexible, often highly chromatic vocal line, Spohr employs an unusual degree of harmonic subtlety and exploits the potential of the piano to illustrate images evoked by the texts. More conventional than some of the solo songs, the duets Opp. 107 and 108, are full of tenderness and a "sublime grandeur" which makes it possible to understand how Spohr was once regarded as the only worthy successor to the tradition of Mozart and Beethoven.



## Three Songs by Louis Spohr

### 1. Liebesschwärmerei - Love's Extasy

If I were a little bird, I would fly to him, without rest, over oceans and valleys. But, O, I am not a little bird and must remain where I am.

### 2. Gretchen - Margaret at the Spinning-wheel (from "Faust")

My peace is gone, my heart is heavy;  
Never, never again will I find rest.  
When I am not with him I am in my grave,  
the whole world turns to bitter gall.  
I seek only him when I leave the house.  
My bosom yearns towards him,  
If only I could seize him and hold him  
and kiss him to my heart's content -  
under his kisses I should die!

### 3. Kennst du das Land? - Do you know the Land?

Do you know the land where the lemons blossom?  
Where the golden oranges glow among the dark leaves,  
a soft breeze blows from the blue sky,  
and the still myrtle and the tall laurels grow?  
Do you know it? There, I long to be with you, my love.

## Three Duets, Opus 108

### 1. Abendlied - Evening Song

The still, quiet night speaks not of troubles,  
the flowers bow their heads and sleep.  
Everything on earth is given peace.  
Stars begin to make their heavenly circle.

### 2. Das Herz - The Heart

My heart longs for joy and pain, it can never be still.

### 3. Ruhe - Repose

When the sun's last rays of twilight fall on the ocean and darkness covers the valleys, peace comes. The wildly busy life with its stresses and longings is put to rest. What, heart, were you searching for? Close now your eyes and go to your eternal rest.

## Three Duets, Opus 107

### 1. Liebesfragen - A Question of Love

Tell me, how can you tell if it's love?  
When the tongue does not speak of it, but the eyes do.  
Ah, how can one win love?  
Speak of it with your loved one and hold it quietly in your heart.  
Love blooms in secrecy.

### 2. Wechselgesang - Antiphony

Who is singing here these enchanting songs?  
I must crown such a singer with the wonderful flowers.  
O, let me alone, I am not alone here with my songs.  
The songs of the singer sound again so charmingly!  
O let me be the voice of your echo.  
Listen! How the songs of two nightingales merge.  
How sweet it is when the voices blend to make a fuller  
sound, as do two souls together when they join life.

### 3. Liebe - Love

When in spring everything is smiling and nature springs forth with new life, do you not feel a longing  
awaken in you too? What could this be? This desire, this passion? I think I know what it is. Could it  
be love? Yes, it must be love!

### Sei still, mein Herz (Be Still, My Heart)

I held the hope deep in my heart that the object of my dreams might love me in return. The earth lay  
before me as in a dream of Spring. But this hope only brought me the ridicule of others. Be still, my  
heart and do not think of it. This is the truth, and the other is only a dream.

### Zwiegesang (Duet)

A little bird sat on the branch of a lilac bush in the still, lovely May evening. A young girl sat under  
that bush in the tall grass. When the bird sang the girl listened, and when the girl began to sing, the  
bird became silent. This duet was heard throughout the whole moonlight-drenched valley. The bird  
sang of the warmth of Spring and the girl sang of love. I shall not forget this duet my whole life long.



### "Erlkonig" (The Erl-King)

Who rideth so late through tempest wild?  
It is the father with his child;  
he tightly clasps the boy with his arm,  
he holds him safely and keeps him warm.  
"My child, why cling in such terror to me?"  
"The Erl-king, father, dost thou not see?  
With crown and scepter behold him rise!"  
"My child, the mist deceives thine eyes."  
"Beloved boy, oh come with me, such merry  
    games I will play with thee,  
the brightest flowers our land can show,  
my mother gay dresses will bestow."  
"My father, my father, oh dost thou hear  
    the Erl-king whispering into my ear?"  
"Be calm, my child, disturb not thy mind,  
the dry leaves rustle, disturbed by wind."  
"Sweet boy, wilt wander with me? my daughters  
    shall tenderly watch o'er thee.  
In their magic mazes they nightly will sweep,  
and dance thee and rock thee and sing thee  
    to sleep."  
"My father, my father, oh seest thou not the  
    Erl-king's daughters in yonder dark spot?"  
"My child, my child, I see it full clear,  
how grey in the dust the old willow-trees rear."  
"I love thee well, I dote on thy figure so fair,  
resist and by force then my prize I will tear.  
"Oh, father, oh father, he's seizing my arm!  
Alas, the Erl-king has wrought me harm!"  
The father shudders, he spurs thro' the night,  
the moaning child to his bosom held tight.  
Thus home is reached in anguish dread, but ah!  
    the boy in his arms was dead!

### "Abendstille" (Evening Stillness)

The day has laid her down to rest;  
now all at once the breezes fail;  
no leaflet stirs on nature's breast  
and scarce a grassblade in the vale.

The breath of summer, mild and warm,  
along the moonlit glade doth steal;  
and on my bosom rent with storm  
the tender down of peace I feel.

O silent, sweet and gentle night,  
when sinks the world to slumber blest,  
o'erwatched alone by angels bright  
who lull our souls to rest, to rest!

## I. THE WOMAN WHO CROSSED THE PLAINS

She was the least of them  
who turned their faces to the West.

But she led them  
though it was hard to remember  
where the rivers ran  
and where the elk and bear  
found their paths  
through the mountains.

And when her time came  
she stopped  
while the men went forward;  
she knelt above a soft doeskin  
and eased her baby  
into the world.

Then she hurried to catch up:  
she must find roots to cook,  
and leaves and herbs--  
and twigs and branches:  
the men liked a big fire.

And when the men were fed,  
she sat apart,  
in the dark,  
and nursed her baby.

## II. THE LADY WHO LIVED NEAR THE MOUNTAINS

When I first came here  
there was the gold--  
and the men--  
but nothing lasts  
except the big white mountain  
across the lake  
and the fireweed  
that burns all summer  
on the slopes.

Why did I stay?  
Who would trade this wind  
that blows the snow  
across the tundra?  
Where else could I see  
the grizzlies and their cubs  
eating berries in the sunshine.  
How could I tell the weather  
if I could not see  
the snow plumes  
streaming from the peaks,  
gilded with the sun?

I went to town one time  
and bought a tractor  
and drove it from the railroad  
to my cabin  
And then I built an airstrip.

My wants are simple:  
each Thursday I meet the mail plane  
and pick up  
my case of Lowenbrau.



### III. AUTUMN: KANTISHNA

To Johnny B., in Memoriam

Caribou wear velvet in September,  
Mountains burn in reindeer moss.

When you are young  
You're never very far from hope--  
Five dogs before a sled  
And twelve pancakes in a knapsack  
Will get you there in five days or less.  
Rainbows come to earth in different places;  
Gold is not found in pots;  
Dust and nuggets gather slowly in small pouches.

Fireweed moults in autumn,  
Winter toclats snowstumble.

The lucky move on and leave the losers.  
Each year the berries grow closer to the ground,  
The sheep climb higher in the mountains.  
Bones need but little warmth  
In the slowness of a long, black night.

"If the stars are burning,  
Why are winter nights so cold?"

Then there were the three of you:  
You dodged his bullets, laughing,  
And after they locked him up,  
One cold snap, the dogs cried all night.  
You stored her in your cache;  
When you strapped her frozen body to your sled  
You cursed, "God-damn you, Fanny,  
Why you die in February?"

Columbine blossoms in the fallen roof;  
A raven perches on your empty chimney.

## IF THE STARS ARE BURNING

Frank Buske, poet and former head of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Department of English, first went to Alaska in 1950. During that first year he met Johnny Bucia, the last inhabitant of the once thriving mining settlement of Kantishna, ninety miles into Denali Park. Johnny, possibly a Yugoslavian, told him tales of the 1912 gold strike and the miners and their women who made up that colorful part of Alaska's past. The two poems, "The Lady Who Lived Near the Mountains" and "Autumn: Kantishna," were based on these stories. Fanny had died a few months before Frank arrived and he heard of her life and death from Johnny. Frank's poem is based on what her life might have been like. It is true that Fanny did build the airstrip so that her Lowenbrau could be delivered weekly. At the end of her life, Fanny, Johnny, and one other man lived alone in the almost unpopulated settlement. The other man went mad and had to be taken away by federal agents. Fanny did die in February - when sub-zero temperatures made it too cold to travel. Her body was stored in Johnny's cache and later, when the weather was warmer, he drove it to Fairbanks on his sled to be given over to a local mortuary for burial. Johnny lived on in Kantishna for about another year before he too died, leaving the once thriving Kantishna gold camp deserted.

The first poem of "If the Stars are Burning" is based on the tale of Sacajewa, an Indian woman mentioned in the memoirs of Meriwether Lewis of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Violet Archer is one of Canada's premiere composers and I feel so very lucky that the University of Alaska Foundation made it possible to have her, "a woman of the North," as composer for Frank's wonderful poems. Dr. Archer was born in Montreal and was graduated from McGill University in piano and composition, then earned the Associate Diploma of the Royal Canadian College of Organists. In 1942 she studied composition in New York with Bela Bartok and then from 1947-1949 with Paul Hindemith at the Yale School of Music where she received the Master of Music degree in 1949, summa cum laude.

She has taught at McGill University, North Texas State University, where she was Composer-in-Residence from 1950-1953, Cornell University, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Alberta. At the latter institution she chaired the Division of Theory and Composition from 1962-1978 and since then has held the title of Professor of Music Emerita. She has been Composer-in-Residence at the Banff School of Fine Arts and several institutions in Canada, including the University of Windsor and McGill University, have awarded her honorary doctorates. Her honors are many and include Yale University's Citation for Distinguished Service in the Field of Music, the Queen's Jubilee Silver Medal, Canada's Composer of the Year in 1984, and most recently, induction into the City of Edmonton's Cultural Hall of Fame.

It has been a very rewarding experience to bring together the talents of Frank Buske and Violet Archer and to have a new composition as a result of their collaboration. Acknowledgement is given to the University of Alaska Foundation and President Donald O'Dowd for making this commission possible.

Suzanne Summerville



The Department of Music gratefully acknowledges the participation of the following faculty members and guests in this evening's concert:

**Alexandra Munn**, piano

**Dennis Prime**, clarinet

**Diane Nelsen**, soprano

**Harold Wiens**, baritone

**Norman Nelson**, violin







